

# Testing of new item formulation for evaluation of Satisfaction with life as a Whole

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## INTRODUCTION

General life satisfaction (GLS) is an important component of subjective wellbeing theories and instruments. These theories intend to explore what could be defined as a normally positive state of mind which involves the whole life experience of the person (Cummins 2010). For this study, we adopted Cummins SWB Homeostasis Theory, that offers a comprehensive and empirically validated description of this construct, being its instruments and rational adopted in several countries.

This theory, using the example of body temperature, proposes that each person has a biologically determined level of SWB that is maintained and controlled “set-point” that range between 70 and 90 points on a standard 0–100 point scale (Cummins 2010, Cummins et al. 2013; Cummins et al. 2014). To evaluate this individual perceptions, one of the most widely known measure that evaluate it is Personal Wellbeing Index, a measure that was developed by The International Wellbeing Group (IWBG, 2003), based on the earlier work of Cummins regarding Quality of Life (1991, 1996, 1997). There are several versions of the instrument, from adults (PWI-A), school children (PWI-SC) and intellectual disabilities persons (PWI-ID), and are numerous translations with good psychometric properties (e.g.: Casas, Bello, González, & Aligué, 2012; Cummins & Lau, 2005; Dias & Bastos, 2014; Ribeiro, & Cummins, 2008).

In the present version of PWI-A (IWBG, 2013), GLS is evaluated by an optional item - Satisfaction with Life as a Whole (SLW) - that is currently being discussed in its best formulation. In the actual version “Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole?” some researchers question the efficacy of a simpler version “How satisfied are you with your life?”.

## OBJECTIVES

In this paper we intend to evaluate the effect of both versions of the item [“Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole?” and “How satisfied are you with your life?”] in GLS perception when related to PWI-A eight specific domains: Standard of Living, Personal Health, Achieving in Life, Personal Relationships, Personal Safety, Community-Connectedness, Future Security and Spirituality or Religion.

## MATHERIALS AND METHODS

### Sample

Participated in the study 509 individuals, 202 were women (39.7%), aged between 18 and 65 years (M = 35.12, SD = 9.69), and the most frequent school level was secondary education (n = 209, 41.2%). Most of individuals are single (n = 228, 44.9%) or married (n = 235, 46.3%).

### Measures

It was used a sociodemographic questionnaire and PWI-A with the General life satisfaction and the eight specific domains: Standard of Living, Personal Health, Achieving in Life, Personal Relationships, Personal Safety, Community-Connectedness, Future Security and Spirituality or Religion. The PWI-A is adapted to Portuguese with good psychometric properties in terms of validity and reliability ( $\alpha=0,81$ ) (Ribeiro, & Cummins, 2008).

### Procedures

To avoid the order effect, we tested two versions of the protocol: one starting with the new version (N-SLW) and ending with the actual version (SLW); and other presented the SLW and ends with N-SLW.

IBM – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (v. 20.0) software was used for data screening and analysis. Data collected were standardized to a 0–100 point scale (International Wellbeing Group, 2006) and submitted to several statistical analyses to evaluate reliability, validity, multiple regression, and relations with socio-demographic variables with both versions of the measure. According with the administration manual of the measure, they were deleted the cases in which respondents consistently answered the maximum or minimum scores on all 8 domains.

## RESULTS

The psychometric properties of PWI-A version were consistent with previous versions, whether in its unidimensional structure or good reliability ( $\alpha = .839$ ). In descriptive statistics, an average score of 74.2% points was found with the SLW before the specific items (SD = 17.89), when compared with an average of 75.0 points of the N-SLW in the end of the measure (SD = 17.08). Also when we start with the N-SLW (M = 78.2, SD = 17.56), we can find a higher average than the SLW in the end (M = 78.8, SD = 16.05). When we consider the correlation with the SLW item with the average PWI-A, we can also higher correlations, whether placed at the beginning ( $r = .651$ ,  $p < .01$ ) or after the PWI ( $r = .740$ ,  $p < .01$ ), when compared with the N-SLW ( $r = .637$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $r = .738$ ,  $p < .01$ , respectively). Is interesting to notice, also, that the correlation tends to be higher in both versions after the items, what might be associated with an increase of reflection and conscientiousness of life satisfaction.

	M	SD	OLD	NEW	Standard of Living	Personal Health	Achieving in Life	Personal relationships	Personal Safety	Community-Connectedness	Future Security	Spirituality or Religion	NEW	OLD	PWI-A
OLD GLS	74.20	17.89	1	-	.692**	.444**	.594**	.483**	.379**	.293**	.401**	.314**	.566**	(.a)	.651**
NEW GLS	78.17	15.92	-	1	.620**	.313**	.532**	.479**	.297**	.532**	.448**	.334**	(.a)	.643**	.637**
Standard of Living	69.90	17.56	.692**	.620**	1	.387**	.637**	.419**	.383**	.396**	.518**	.349**	.615**	.633**	.737**
Personal Health	78.74	19.00	.444**	.313**	.387**	1	.403**	.440**	.376**	.350**	.353**	.276**	.401**	.513**	.651**
Achieving in Life	72.26	16.58	.594**	.532**	.637**	.403**	1	.425**	.366**	.409**	.562**	.315**	.703**	.590**	.739**
Personal Relationships	80.73	15.74	.483**	.479**	.419**	.440**	.425**	1	.454**	.541**	.310**	.310**	.515**	.514**	.685**
Personal Safety	76.88	17.11	.379**	.297**	.383**	.376**	.366**	.454**	1	.417**	.481**	.311**	.463**	.358**	.680**
Community-Connectedness	78.09	16.17	.293**	.532**	.396**	.350**	.409**	.541**	.417**	1	.387**	.384**	.433**	.606**	.688**
Future Security	64.20	21.25	.401**	.448**	.518**	.353**	.562**	.310**	.481**	.387**	1	.346**	.544**	.506**	.734**
Spirituality or Religion	71.16	20.50	.314**	.334**	.349**	.276**	.315**	.310**	.311**	.384**	.346**	1	.404**	.391**	.613**
NEW GLS	75.02	17.01	.566**	-	.615**	.401**	.703**	.515**	.463**	.433**	.544**	.404**	1	-	.738**
OLD GLS	78.42	16.05	-	.643**	.633**	.513**	.590**	.514**	.358**	.606**	.506**	.391**	-	1	.740**
PWI-A	74.00	12.41	.651**	.637**	.737**	.651**	.739**	.685**	.680**	.688**	.734**	.613**	.738**	.740**	1

Table 1. Descriptive and correlational statistics between SLW and N-SLW with PWI.

Using multiple regression to explore GLS with PWI-A, we found a slightly higher variance of satisfaction with SLW ( $R^2_{ad} = 53.9\%$ ;  $F = 40.235$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R = .744$ ) than with the N-SLW ( $R^2_{ad} = 46.8\%$ ;  $F = 27.235$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R = .697$ ). When we tested the N-SLW after the PWI items, we found a significative model ( $F = 51.872$ ,  $p < .01$ ) that explains 60.3%, slightly higher than SLW than explains 57.9% ( $F = 42.044$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R = .770$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

PWI is an widely used measure to evaluate personal wellbeing and general life satisfaction. In Portugal, it is currently adapted to adult (Ribeiro, & Cummins, 2008) and school children (Dias & Bastos, 2014). With this first exploratory study we aimed to explore the impact of a new and simpler version of the General Life Satisfaction item. Results seem to find no significative differences between these two versions. Despite a higher average scores when GLS item is placed after the domain specific items, eventually influenced by the reflection of the person about his/her conditions and subjective, the correlations between the scores are high, whether when we begin with the old version ( $r=.566$ ,  $p<.01$ ) or new one ( $r=.643$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

New cross-cultural invariance studies might help us to support eventually the item that might capture this complex individual perception.

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